Websites

1. Google Sketchup: [http://sketchup.google.com](http://sketchup.google.com/)

This website requires installation, but it’s free from Google! Google Sketchup allows you to build your own 3D shapes and models. Most commonly used in conjunction with Google Earth, Google Sketchup allows the user to create 3D models of real buildings found all over the world. After creating a model, one can then give its location one Google Earth, for future navigators to enjoy! This is a great tool to use for teaching geometry concepts. The video tutorials are appropriate for beginners.

I would primarily use this site for math, with geometry in mind. I might use it myself to design some shapes and allow my students to identify each geometric shape. In a whole-group setting, this site could also be used to develop a lesson for science inquiry regarding physics instruction. Before building a model, for instance a mousetrap car or bridge, Google Sketchup could be used for the whole class to develop an online blueprint before beginning construction.

This site is excellent in detail and would be a great supplement to math and science lessons, however, I would not use it in the lower primary grades as some of the functions are too complicated for younger users. I may allow 4th and 5th graders to use it to design models for a physics lab, or recreate important historical buildings for a history lesson. Used appropriately, this website could be helpful in a whole-group setting for any grade level.

1. Blabberize: [http://blabberize.com](http://blabberize.com/)

This website would be *very* popular for classroom use! Using an uploaded picture, the user can speak through the image in the picture to make it “talk”. Instructions are simple and the product only takes a few minutes to make. First, the user chooses and crops a picture to upload. This picture could be anything found online or a picture from a personal computer. Next, the user crops out a “mouth” piece from which the picture will “speak”. Finally, the user records or uploads his/her voice for the picture.

This website would be very easy and very entertaining to incorporate for classroom use. I would use my uploaded pictures to “lecture” or inform students during minilessons (because listening to a llama teach can be much more entertaining than watching a teacher.) I could also use my uploaded pictures to recite learning raps and poems to teach the students to help them learn a particular science concept and avoid the risk of looking too obnoxiously dorky. Students could even use this sight for oral reports! Students could upload pictures of people of interest and record themselves giving an oral report on Sir Isaac Newton perhaps and inform the class about the discovery of gravity from the mouth of the discoverer himself! This tool would be very beneficial for ELLs or even very shy learners, who might prefer not to speak in front of the class directly.

1. Visuwords:  [http://www.visuwords.com](http://www.visuwords.com/)

Visuwords is an online graphical dictionary to help the user construct word associations for new vocabulary words. The search bar at the top of the screen allows the user to search for any vocabulary word. Once the database finds it, the word bubble becomes displayed in the middle of the screen along with multiple “synsets”—bubbles containing associated forms of the word as a noun, adjective, adverb, or verb. The synsets are linked to the word through varying color-coded lines of connection. Specific lines indicate whether the connecting synset is a participle of the original word, opposes the original word, is a synonym for the original word, etc.

I would use Visuwords in my classroom to aid in vocabulary comprehension and enrichment across any and all content areas. Specifically regarding specialized vocabulary or robust vocabulary for science, this website could be used to help students construct their own personal word webs, using the visual from the website as a model. This visual would be particularly helpful for ELL and ESE students. I would also use this website to aid students during language arts lessons on synonyms or to help older students develop new word choices for poetry units.

1. Issuu: <http://issuu.com/>

Issuu allows the user to create his/her own online magazine publication. The user simply uploads photos and PDF files onto the website to style a magazine any way that he/she likes. This website also features a plethora of examples created by other users. Genres range from nature and animals to entertainment, there is even a category for the bizarre! Browsing through the selection of pre-created magazines, teachers can easily find specific content-area related issues for use in the classroom. To specifically aid science instruction, the teacher could allow students to research information from the nature and animals category or the technology category to supplement specific lessons. Students could then use this information to add to class instruction and take ownership of the learning process.

In my class, I would like to use this website to create a final product after a science unit. The class as a whole could create a magazine publication on Issuu, with certain student groups acting as specific departments in magazine publication. I would put my students in small groups and require each group to research specific information about a topic of interest. For instance, if my 3rd grade class was studying plant biology, our magazine might be called *Green: The Lives of Plants.*  One group might be in charge of an article labeled *Weeds: The Scandal in Your Backyard!* This group would be required to research how weeds function by killing other plants. Another group might research photosynthesis, another might research the effects of different types of soil and climate, and still another on the life cycle of a flowering plant. Students would have a deadline to complete each article (as in a real magazine publication), and at the end of the unit, students would submit their research to be published in our class edition contribution for Issuu. Our class magazine could even be displayed for parents to read online or during open house as part of a science portfolio.

1. CamStudio: <http://camstudio.org/>

This website provides free streaming video software for Internet users. It’s very simple. As the website puts it “CamStudio is able to record all screen and audio activity on your computer and create industry-standard AVI video files and using its built-in SWF Producer can turn those AVIs into lean, mean, bandwidth-friendly Streaming Flash videos (SWFs).” Simply put, CamStudio allows the user to create video tutorials on a computer screen. It even allows the user to include a webcam video of him/herself through the Video Annotation feature. This tool is easy to download and easy to utilize for home or classroom use.

I would use Camstudio in my classroom to give students specific directions for any and all computer-supplemented projects. I would use it to instruct students on how I wanted them to use certain websites or webquests to supplement lessons in class. I find CamStudio to be a particularly useful tool in lieu of my absence. For instance, if my class begins an especially long unit on plant biology or if I had planned for them to begin using a webquest on a day that I (for whatever reason) was unable to be at school, I could allow my substitute to pull up my video tutorial on the Mimeo and get students caught up to the lesson by the time I get back to school. CamStudio would be great for this because it allows the class to progress at a normal pace without losing momentum because of a change in schedule.

1. Fodey: <http://www.fodey.com/generators/newspaper/snippet.asp>

Fodey allows the user to create his/her own newspaper article. Much more simplistic than Issuu, Fodey simply requires that the user type in the desired name and date of the newspaper clipping, and then allows him/her to enter their story in the text box. The user then clicks the button to “Generate” his/her text and *voila!*—a newspaper!

In my classroom, I would use Fodey for special projects and end-of-the-unit assignments. Students could create newspaper linking science and social studies skills if the class were to study the effects of a natural disaster on a particular country. For instance, if the class were studying Haiti, students could research and create a newspaper detailing the way earthquakes form, while also taking into account the lives of the Haitians effected by this tragedy and the efforts of humanitarians to aide their relief.

I would love to use Fodey during the first few weeks of school to generate a class newspaper that details the lives of my older students! Each student would be required to write about the most important or exciting thing that has happened in their life (or over the summer), from the perspective of a journalist. Once all students are finished with the writing portion, they could copy-paste their information into Fodey, generate a newspaper, and we could print them out in class. Students could supplement their articles with pictures. We would post our newspapers on a side wall for everyone to read about during their free time.